



Is Your Agency Prepared? The Need for Business Continuity Planning

Disruptions such as tornadoes and other natural disasters, violence in the workplace, epidemics, terrorist acts, and many other threats to "business as usual" are becoming more commonplace. If not anticipated prudently, these disruptions can be much more costly than necessary. Preplanning for the continuity and recovery of your business is critically necessary and requires the involvement of all staff.

What would you do if. . .

- Your facility's roof is damaged or destroyed during a storm?
- 50% of your staff fails to show up for work due to the flu?
- A water pipe bursts and floods your facility?
- An armed individual enters your facility and threatens your staff?

During emergency situations, each agency must first recover its own operations before it can respond effectively to a wider disaster in the city, county, state, or region. The successful and timely recovery of agency operations is greatly enhanced by business continuity planning¹.

What is at stake?

People: Above all else, remember that safety of life is paramount. Following this, the recovery of your agency and the services it provides to its customers becomes a priority.

Property: Proper planning and remediation can reduce the damage caused by potential sources of business disruptions. However, if your primary facility is damaged or destroyed do you have an alternate work site?

Process: What are the costs and liabilities if your critical business processes go down – e.g. how will invoices be paid? How will citizen services be performed? How will eligibility be verified for social services? How long can processes be down?

Perception: What are the impacts if your agency cannot perform its main function? Beyond the issues of budget, how will your agency's image to the public be damaged by an inability to act?

How ready is your agency?

Can each employee of your agency answer the following questions?

1. What do I do during a disaster situation?
2. When do I do it?
3. Where do I do it?
4. How do I do it?

YOYO 72 – you're on your own for seventy-two hours



The Role of Agency Level Planning

Agency level policy and procedures establish a 'chain of command and action':

- What are the agency's business processes?
- Who 'owns' these processes?
- Who is responsible to act (not react)?
- What actions must be taken to recover?
- Is there a business continuity plan?
- Is there a disaster recovery plan?

Preparation involves the following:

- Conduct a risk assessment. Have you identified the risks?
- Identify your business processes. What are the critical processes supporting your agency's mission? Are other agencies dependent on or administratively attached to your agency? Is your agency dependent on other agencies?
- Identify your essential records and systems that must be recovered in order to re-establish agency operations.
- Identify your recovery teams. Who are the critical employees that will enable your agency to recover? Each of these individuals must have one or more fully trained backups with the authority for decision-making.
- Identify and document your resources - people, policies, plans, processes, equipment, agencies, and vendors. This is where information technology - both telecom and computers- should be addressed.

A plan is not enough. There must be a business continuity program in place to ensure that staff training, disaster simulations, evacuation and recovery exercises, and communications are in place. The time to discover and address issues is before a disruption occurs. Timeliness is critical in the aftermath of a disaster. Business continuity planning and program development may seem to be added costs at the moment, but during the 72 hours after the disaster, on whom will you rely?



so . . . How ready are you?

Business continuity is about people and their ability to recover from a disaster – to ensure that your agency recovers. Continuity planning is everybody's business.

Helpful information and contacts can be found at:

Email: GTA-OIS@gta.ga.gov - Contact to find out more information

Executive Order:

http://gov.georgia.gov/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/32/5/10933575903_19_08_01.pdf

Reporting Metrics: Business Continuity – Appendix 5 Page 9

http://www.gta.georgia.gov/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/63/26/110321911SecurityReportingStandard.pdf

ⁱ Your agency may know it by another name – Disaster Preparedness Planning, Disaster Recovery Planning, or even Continuity of Operations Planning (CoOP).